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"Peace notes"

[New York]

[1917]

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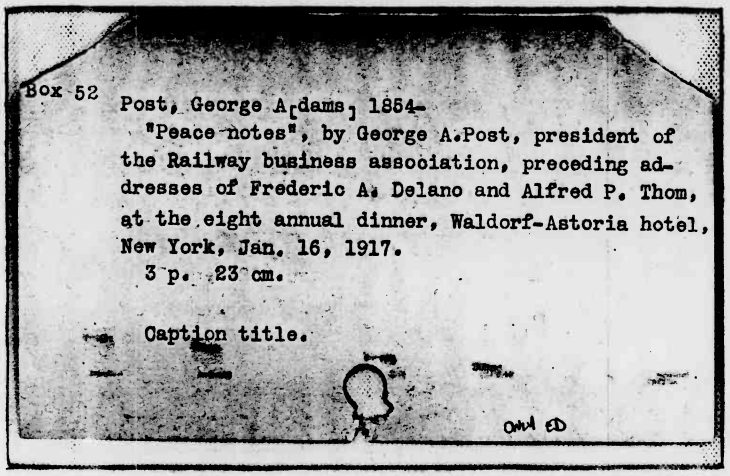
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3 p. 23 cm.

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"Peace Notes"

BY o.e.

GEORGE A. POST

PRESIDENT OF THE RAILWAY BUSINESS ASSOCIATION,

PRECEDING ADDRESSES OF FREDERIC A. DELANO AND ALFRED P. THOM, AT THE EIGHTH ANNUAL DINNER, WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL, NEW YORK, JAN. 16, 1917

JUST to show you how open and above-board the Railway Business Association is in all its dealings, and in order that there may be no necessity for a Congressional investigation, to ascertain who "leaked," I stand in your presence to announce, not confidentially, but in clarion tones, that two "Peace Notes" are about to be uttered in this room. I want to tell you another thing: If the Peace notes here to be sounded, together with those that have preceded them, and those in constant succession to come after them, shall ultimately bring about an *entente cordiale* between hitherto contending forces, there will come a Peace to a realm whose boundaries are co-extensive with those of our beloved country, the mellowing and fraternizing influences of which will ramify to the boundless benefit of every inhabitant of the land.

A Peace, the mere whispering of whose possible imminence will not cause a crash in Wall Street. A Peace, the contemplation of which will render stable that which is now uncertain, and transform depression into the buoyancy always pervading those who are content. A Peace under whose benign aegis industry will thrive, values will expand, investors will be heartened, territorial area now too remote from markets to woo the husbandman, miner or woodman, will be brought within reach of waiting consumers, and embargoes which dam the arteries of commerce will be unknown because of the existence of ample terminals, vehicles and propulsive power. A Peace whereunder no more will be heard the strident denunciations of the railway baiter, nor will selfishness plot against the public weal. Some day this Peace will come, and may God speed its coming.

Legislative guns of an all-powerful populace, belching forth from forty-nine coigns of strategic vantage their fusilades of statutory shrapnel, have done their work of demolition of whatever there were of dangerous citadels of corporate greed. Their detonations have shivered the souls of those who vainly opposed the embattled wrath of a Nation. If War is the collision of forces striving for the mastery, then the war in America between the railroads and the public is over. The complete domination of the public is established beyond a doubt. No railway man disputes it. Upon the neck of the railroad system is planted the giant heel of the People's Power.

But the victory of one of the antagonists over the other does not establish Peace. Such a consummation lies within the province of the conqueror, and depends also upon

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1. Railways, U.S., 1917.

the temper and subsequent attitude of the conquered. The vanquished must perforce do the bidding of the master. What shall be the requirements put upon those who must obey? Upon the answer hinges the dawning of Peace. Peace is not the mere abatement of open hostilities; it is the attainment of tranquillity—tranquillity is repose of mind. Such repose comes when the exercise of authority is tempered by careful consideration of the welfare of the governed, their prosperity and happiness.

Responsive to the recommendation of the President of the United States, who entertains the deep conviction that the whole railway situation ought to be calmly and comprehensively reviewed, so that beyond peradventure there shall be no hindrance in the path of the railways, whereby their service to the public may be diminished in its efficiency, or obstructed in their development, the Congress has created what is known as the "Newlands Joint Congressional Committee." Its membership comprises five United States Senators and five Members of the House of Representatives. Elaborate plans have been mapped out for hearings before this Joint Committee. There have been summoned to its bar to be heard representatives of the railroads, and of our national industries, regulatory officials (both Federal and State), economists, financiers, and apostles of all manner of creeds for the purification and amelioration by regulation, or of government ownership of transportation means and methods. The plan and scope outlined are commendable for their breadth and thoroughness.

It is the high duty of these honorable gentlemen—and may Heaven endow them with the genius—to make true, impartial and statesmanlike deliverance of their findings. That this Committee shall divest itself of all preconceived prejudices, patiently delve into all the intricacies of the involved problem confided to them for ascertainment, honestly weigh in the balance conflicting theories, and patriotically strive to create a system of regulation for the general welfare, rising above and ignoring all narrow, sectional or local desires for advantage over their fellow Americans, is the eager soul hope of our Nation.

For the creation of this tribunal, the railways pleaded long and earnestly. In preparation for appearance before it, for months many of the executives of great systems, and the members of their staffs, have counseled together, bringing forth for common discussion the results of their wide individual experiences and profound research. Together they have taken cognizance of the difficulties and perplexities that beset them as administrators of tremendous public interests. Face to face they have taken note of the errors of the past. Their anxious and searching minds have appreciated the practices that engendered the whirlwind of public punitive determination. As the successors and legatees of those who sowed the wind, they have with clear heads and honorable purpose sought the path which shall rehabilitate their properties, win popular approval, and make the railroads the pride of the country, a bulwark of safety in time of national peril, and the faithful, adequate and efficient servants of its teeming activities from day to day.

Talk about preparedness to serve our country! What about this compulsory training? Who says a month at Plattsburg will make an agile, bulls'-eye hitting, obedient patriot out of a raw, corpulent or bumptious recruit? Is there virtue in the long and weary hike, carrying a back-breaking pack? Is being put on short rations a cure for flatulency? Is being obliged to clean up and put in order one's tent, subject to

critical inspection, a needed lesson in sanitation and good housekeeping? Why, our railroad officials have had, not a beggarly month, but years of that kind of rigorous experience! These Plattsburg volunteers, and our returning militiamen from the Mexican border, are mere tyros compared with these seasoned, statute-scarred veterans of our railroads! Talk about being "broken in" by discipline! They know what it means when some political General, Colonel, Captain, or even Corporal, barks at them, "Attention!" You bet they take notice! No matter which way they have been headed, nor how fast they were going, if the command has sounded down the line, "Halt!" they have stopped, all right, whatever they were doing. And if the Governments—the big one and the littler ones—have screamed forth the order, "Company, right, Ho!" they have marched away, not gaily, perhaps, nor blithely, but they have marched all the same, resolutely, and more or less rhythmically. Some folks call me "Colonel." What do you think of my familiarity with military jargon? Do I qualify?

Honor bright! For whatever ailed them, or of whatever sins of commission or omission the railroads have been deemed guilty, they sure have had the *boot*, the *fist* and the *bite*. I do not know what "spread-eagling" is, but whatever it is, and however the victim is strapped to the gun-wheel, our railroad friends have had that done to them also.

And here they are, in the pink of condition for valuable service, eager to perform it. The question is: Does the Government possess the wisdom to utilize them to the best advantage for the promotion of the transportation interests of our country, which are now imperiled? We shall see.

REQUESTS FOR COPIES of this pamphlet will be welcome from all those desiring to place it in the hands of their representatives or friends. Copies furnished or sent direct to lists upon application to Frank W. Noxon, Secretary Railway Business Association, 30 Church Street, New York.

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